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Problems in Online Classes

Education | College & Higher Education
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Traditional face-to-face, in-house teaching methodology is being usurped by the allure of technological advancement. Online classes are becoming more popular among Ivy League institutions, community colleges and every form of higher education in between. Even though online classes are cheaper to offer and can reach a more geographically diverse student community than traditional classes, there are problems with online courses that cripple their success.

Human Connection

An online class eliminates the human connection that a face-to-face, in-house teaching environment provides. An online instructor cannot gauge the mood, involvement and engagement level of her students the way she can in a traditional lecture-based classroom. An educator's ability to adapt her course material and presentation according to her students' reactions is at the core of an enriching learning experience. This is lost in an online class setting.

In addition, students enrolled in online classes aren't able to interact with their fellow classmates. Instead of being able to form study groups face to face, students in online classes rely primarily on email to interact with others.

Student Motivation

It takes a highly self-motivated and independent student to complete an online course. The overwhelming majority of students in the U.S. have completed their primary and secondary educational experiences in a traditional, face-to-face teaching environment. It is naive to assume that a student with a history in a traditional learning environment should be able to easily adjust to a more independent, isolated teaching methodology. Many students who sign up for online classes aren't prepared for the difficulty added by the absence of face-to-

Instructor Ignorance

Teaching is exceptionally difficult to do well. Many educators spend much of their professional lives striving to engage, motivate, nurture and truly enlighten their students. If educators aren't expertly trained to handle the technological details of an online class, many of the skills and tools they've developed to teach in a more traditional setting will prove worthless. For example, discussion boards are one of the main technological tools used to connect students and teachers in an online setting. If the instructor has difficulty navigating a discussion board, it will jeopardize the success of the class.

Inappropriate Courses

Certain hands-on courses cannot be supported by an online class setting. Public speaking is a class that's crippled if offered in the form of an online class because it depends on external interaction that's impossible for an online class to replicate. There is a fundamental difference between speaking into a video camera lens and addressing a room full of people, but many online public speaking courses exchange one for the other without concern for what skills students will lose as a result.